

Cooke Hydroelectric Plant, Shed
Cooke Dam Road at the Au Sable River
Oscoda Vicinity
Iosco County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-98-F

HAER
MICH
35-OSCO.V
IF-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
Department of the Interior
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

COOKE HYDROELECTRIC PLANT, Storage Shed

HAER No. MI-98-F

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35-OSCO.V,
IF -

Location: Cooke Dam Road at the Au Sable River
Oscoda Vicinity
Isoco County, Michigan

UTM: 17:295560:4927320
Quad: Sid Town, Mich., 1:24,000

Date of
Construction: 1909

Engineer: Not applicable

Present Owner: Consumers Power Company
212 West Michigan Avenue, Jackson, Michigan 49201

Present Use: Storage shed at hydroelectric generating plant

Significance: The Storage Shed exemplifies the type of temporary buildings seen throughout the construction camp that was maintained during the erection of the Cooke Hydroelectric Plant in northeastern Michigan. When Cooke went on line in 1912, it transmitted electrical power at an unprecedented voltage, for use 125 miles away in the growing industrial areas of southern Michigan.

Project
Information: This documentation was prepared by Consumers Power Company (CPCo) in conformance with its Cultural Resources Management Plan for the Au Sable River Hydroelectric Projects (July 1995). The plan stipulated the recordation of the entire Cooke Hydroelectric Plant (according to the standards of the Historic American Engineering Record) as mitigation for the planned rehabilitation of the plant's concrete spillway. The documentation was completed in 1996 by Hess, Roise and Company of Minneapolis under contract with CPCo. Jeffrey A. Hess served as Principal Investigator and Cynthia de Miranda as Project Historian. Project photography was completed under a subcontract with Hess Roise by Clayton B. Fraser of Loveland, Colorado.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

A single-story, wood-frame Storage Shed sits on a concrete slab foundation on the river's south bank, a few hundred feet downstream (east) of the Powerhouse (HAER No. MI-98-C). The board-and-batten, wood-frame structure is situated east of a paved road that provides access to the Powerhouse from the main road, known as Cooke Dam Road. A pair of sliding cargo doors occupy the Storage Shed's main (west) facade, which is a gable wall.¹ The doors slide on an overhead track, and a personnel door is cut into the northern leaf. Nine-light, wood-sash windows punctuate both the north and south walls; two are centered in the north wall and one on the east end of the south wall. The east (rear) facade is featureless.

Asphalt tile covers the roof of the Storage Shed, and its overhanging eaves are supported by exposed rafters. Sheets of green asphalt sheath the siding boards; the battens, along with the door, window, and roof trim, are painted white. The entire structure measures approximately 30' north-south x 24' east-west. The size and appearance of the building indicate that it is probably a relic from the construction camp, erected while the hydropower facility was being built.²

¹ While the Storage Shed more accurately faces southwest, this description is written to reflect approximate full cardinal points for the sake of clarity.

² This description is based on a site survey completed by the authors on 27 July 1995.

HISTORY

Consumers Power Company established a large construction camp at the Cooke dam site when work commenced in 1909. The company divided a tract of land on the river's south bank into lots and made them available to men working on the dam. Married crew members built small, rustic cottages to house immediate family members and up to two additional relatives. About seventy single-story houses populated the camp, which was laid out like a village with streets, alleys, and a sewer system. The camp also had bunkhouses for unmarried workers, storage buildings, and offices. Most of these buildings were simple, wood-frame, gable-roofed structures sheathed in board-and-batten siding with asphalt-shingle roofing.³ A few structures stood out: a large gable-roofed steam plant with a monitor running nearly the length of the roof ridge; a simple, white, two-story structure that may have been a Sears, Roebuck and Company prefabricated building; and two gable-roofed, two-and-one-half-story Attendant's Houses.⁴ Only the Storage Shed and one Attendant's House (HAER No. MI-98-G) remain. The Storage Shed, which does not appear at this location in historic views and maps, apparently has been moved to this site from some other part of the construction camp.⁵

³ For a brief summary of camp regulations, see "The Design and Methods Employed in Constructing the Cooke Water Power Plant on the Au Sahle River in Michigan," *Engineering and Contracting* 37 (5 June 1912): 643. Historic photographs of the construction site offer additional information. See the following historic views appended to HAER No. MI-98: HAER No. MI-98-5 and HAER No. MI-98-6.

⁴ The large white structure was identified in a 1933 Consumers Powers Company description: "Known as the Sears House—was moved from [the town of] Au Sahle in 1910 and used as a staff house for foremen and office help. It is two stories high and approximately 30' x 70'." The name may indicate that the building was purchased from Sears, Roehuck and Company. See the inventory form in "Cooke Dam," a description and information compiled in answer to a questionnaire submitted by R.H. Freese, 1933-1940, Historical Files, Civil/Mechanical Engineering Projects, Engineering and Construction, Consumers Power Company, Parnall Road, Jackson, Michigan.

⁵ "Cooke Dam," map and inventory form. Also see Cooke Hydroelectric Plant construction and overview photographs, Hydro Operations, Consumers Power Company, Cadillac, Michigan.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

HISTORIC VIEWS

Cooke Hydroelectric Plant construction and overview photographs. Hydro Operations, Consumers Power Company, Cadillac, Michigan.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCE

"Cooke Dam." Description and information compiled in answer to a questionnaire submitted by R.H. Freese, 1933-1940. Historical Files, Civil/Mechanical Engineering Projects, Engineering and Construction, Consumers Power Company, Parnall Road, Jackson, Michigan.

PUBLISHED SOURCE

"The Design and Methods Employed in Constructing the Cooke Water Power Plant on the Au Sable River in Michigan." *Engineering and Contracting* 37 (5 June 1912): 639-644.